



## Urban Redevelopment Plan

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## **A. Introduction**

This City of Dacula Urban Redevelopment Plan (this “Urban Redevelopment Plan”) constitutes an urban redevelopment plan of the City of Dacula, Georgia (the “City” or the “City of Dacula”) within the authority of Chapter 61 of Title 36 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, entitled the “Urban Redevelopment Law,” as amended (the “Urban Redevelopment Law”). The redevelopment of the City provides an exciting opportunity to enhance the livability, walkability, economic opportunity, sense of community, and overall vitality of the City’s historic and future downtown core.

The City Council did by resolutions adopted on February 1, 2024 determine that (1) one or more pockets of blight exist in the City and that the rehabilitation, conservation, or redevelopment, or a combination thereof, of such area or areas is necessary in the interest of the public health, safety, morals, or welfare of the residents of the City; and (2) certain property located in the City, which is described under the heading “Boundaries of Urban Redevelopment Area” below, is a “pocket of blight,” within the meaning of Section 36-61-2 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, and did designate such area as appropriate for an urban redevelopment project. The property so described is the “Urban Redevelopment Area” for purposes of this Urban Redevelopment Plan. Certified copies of such resolutions of the City Council are attached to this Urban Redevelopment Plan as Exhibit A. The Urban Redevelopment Area will be conserved and rehabilitated through an urban redevelopment project consisting of a variety of proposed public and private improvements, which are described under the heading “The Urban Redevelopment Project” below (the “Urban Redevelopment Project”).

The use of “urban” in the title may be confusing for some because the Urban Redevelopment Law is commonly used in both rural and suburban municipalities. An Urban Redevelopment Plan is one of many legislative tools the state offers that can be used to assist suburban municipalities in revitalizing their historic downtown cores. Livable, walkable communities adjacent to town center commercial nodes are increasingly popular nationwide. The City of Dacula is centered around a deep sense of community and family. Encouraging the redevelopment of the City’s downtown core with infill development and “village” commercial nodes will better allow Dacula to meet the demands of residents of all ages, who need walkable lower to middle-income housing to remain in or return to the City.

The Dacula 2050 Comprehensive Plan, which was approved by the City Council on February 1, 2024 (the “Comprehensive Plan”), and additional State and County redevelopment tools will be used to guide this Urban Redevelopment Plan, allowing it to revitalize neighborhoods, rehabilitate older homes, recruit and nurture small businesses, ensure architecturally compatible infill development, and generate new uses for undeveloped parcels.

This Urban Redevelopment Plan has the following primary objectives:

- (1) to structure a comprehensive approach to successful redevelopment within the Urban Redevelopment Area that conforms with the Comprehensive Plan;
- (2) to facilitate future creation of tax allocation districts, enterprise, and opportunity zones;
- (3) to provide a variety of transportation options through paths, sidewalks, trails, and complete streets;
- (4) to support diverse housing options to achieve sustainable and balanced housing types with a distinct architectural character;
- (5) to pursue public improvements including appropriate land uses, improved traffic, public transportation, public utilities, communal spaces, and other public projects; and
- (6) to create an increased sense of place through placemaking projects.

## **B. Boundaries of Urban Development Area**

The Urban Redevelopment Area resides within the Comprehensive Plan’s “Dacula Downtown” character area; however, there are three primary zones within the character area that present distinct development patterns and historical character.

### *2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue District*

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue District includes parcels west of Dacula Road, along Winder Highway, and parcels east of Broad Street, bordering Dacula High School. The area includes historic buildings and homes that date back to the City’s incorporation. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue District has suffered from underdevelopment and a lack of maintenance in recent years. The near grid-like development pattern makes it primed for walkable commercial, mixed-use revitalization.

### *Harbins Road and Towler Village Commercial Corridor*

The Harbins Road and Towler Village Corridor includes commercial properties with easy access to Harbins Road, located north of City Hall and south of Winder Highway. The corridor has vacant storefronts, blighted and vacant properties, residential properties, and undervalued commercial properties that lack the connectivity necessary to flourish within the Dacula Downtown character area designation in the Comprehensive Plan.

### *Historic Dacula Village District*

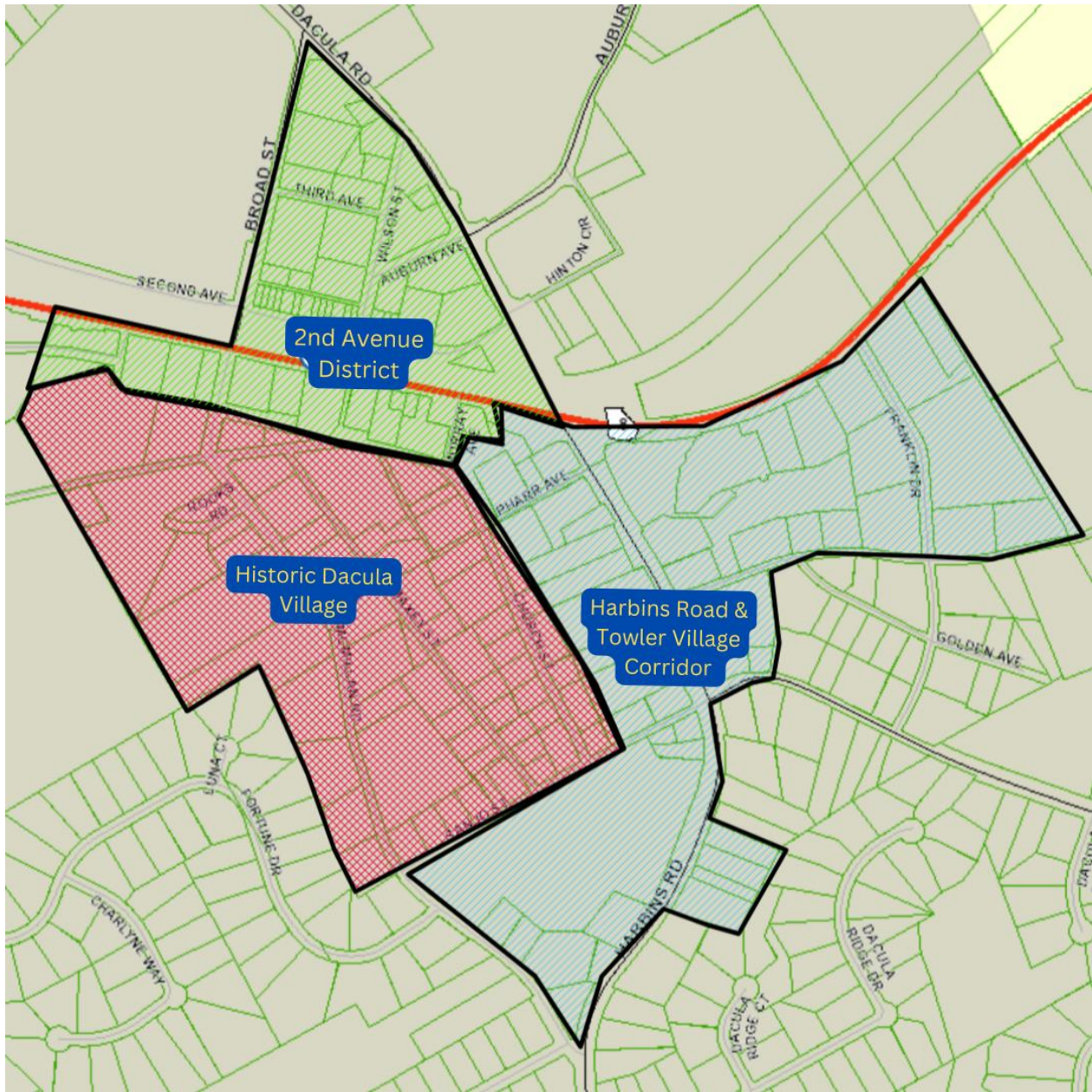
The Historic Dacula Village District includes properties north of the Harbins Road and McMillan Road intersection, extending to Winder Highway. The character area includes residential streets within a walkable or bikeable distance from both the 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue District and the Harbins Road and Towler Village Commercial Corridor. It currently lacks the public spaces, multi-modal infrastructure, and the fully realized development pattern to connect residents to public and commercial resources.

### *Distress Parcels*

In addition to the aforementioned categories, the Urban Redevelopment Area includes vacant and underutilized parcels that do not meet the criterion of the Dacula Downtown Character Area Comprehensive Plan designation and have become visual blights to the community due to lack of maintenance or use.

The boundaries of the Urban Redevelopment Area are described as follows and shown in the map below:

The boundary of the urban redevelopment area begins at the southeast corner of Dacula Road at Broad Street intersection, follows southward until the Winder Highway and Broad Street intersection. Boundary continues westward along Winder Highway for 680 feet (+/-) and then continues southward. The boundary includes properties along McMillan Road until the McMillan Road and Harbins Road intersection. The boundary follows Harbins Road, includes Dacula City Hall, and continues until the Tanner Road intersection. The boundary continues northeast along Tanner Road for 235 feet (+/-) and then continues northward until it intersects with Freemans Mill Road. The boundary continues eastward along Freemans Mill Road for 1,192 feet (+/-). Then, the boundary continues northward until it intersects with Winder Highway. The boundary proceeds westward along Winder Highway until it intersects with Dacula Road where it continues northward until the boundary ends at the Dacula Road and Broad Street intersection.



### **C. Consistency with the City’s Comprehensive Plan**

Dacula’s 2050 Comprehensive Plan is a long-range planning document that provides guard rails for the City’s development in the coming years and decades, painting a complete picture of the City’s future vision. This Urban Redevelopment Plan conforms to and incorporates the components of the Comprehensive Plan, ratified on February 1, 2024, to facilitate compliance with the City's vision.

The Comprehensive Plan outlines the need to identify physical boundaries for a “downtown” and provide recreational opportunities, encourage mixed-use facilities, and revitalize distressed/vacant properties along 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and Winder Highway. The Comprehensive Plan survey details that the lack of clearly identifiable City boundaries is felt by more than 40% of residents.

The Urban Redevelopment Area categories are designated as within the Dacula Downtown character area. The recommended strategies for the Downtown Dacula character area state that proposed projects aim for higher density, increased connectivity, modal options, and should balance land use to provide housing and employment opportunities through the creation of incentives for developers to integrate said objectives. This Urban Redevelopment Plan seeks to execute the Dacula Downtown character area objectives through the Comprehensive Plan land use strategies such as reviewing and updating zoning/development codes to create an architectural character and more pronounced Dacula Downtown identity.

#### **D. Property Acquisition, Disposition, and Relocation**

Any property acquired by the City will be actively developed according to the City’s comprehensive land use plan and as outlined in this Urban Redevelopment Plan. Said property would be rehabilitated, conserved, redeveloped, or a combination thereof, as necessary in the interest of the public health, safety, morals, or welfare of the residents of the City. Blighted structures could be demolished or rehabilitated and the land could be developed to facilitate revitalization for the community. This Urban Development Plan conforms with the City's current zoning resolution, comprehensive plan goals, and relevant building codes. Any exceptions will be subject to approval by the City Council. If occupied properties are publicly acquired and resident relocation is necessary, relocation assistance will be provided in accordance with federal and state law.

#### **E. The Urban Redevelopment Project**

The Urban Redevelopment Project includes the rehabilitation, conservation, and/or redevelopment of the redevelopment area by engaging in public and private improvements. Said improvements focus on using undeveloped property owned by the City of Dacula and the redevelopment of blighted property within the Urban Redevelopment Area. The Urban Redevelopment Project will provide needed community green space, commercial resources, and

municipal services for a city core project at the McMillan Road and Harbins Road intersection, consisting of approximately eleven acres that the City purchased in 2021 to revitalize blighted areas (the “City Core Property”). Additional properties may be acquired and structures may be relocated or demolished to facilitate proposed projects as necessary in the interest of the public health, safety, morals, or welfare of the residents of the City.

The City will form the Urban Redevelopment Agency of Dacula, Georgia (URA) to facilitate the execution of the Urban Redevelopment Project after the Urban Redevelopment Plan’s approval. The following are proposed improvements included in the Urban Redevelopment Project. The City will consider multiple funding sources to fit particular project needs. No particular funding source for any improvement described below has been secured and the timing of each such improvement has not been determined.

- 1. *Municipal Complex:*** Dacula City Hall on Harbins Road was completed in 1999 and an addition was completed in 2015. The facility houses the Human Resources Department, Planning and Development Department, Marshal’s Office, and Finance Department. City Hall’s council chamber serves as its planning commission chamber, municipal court, indoor public event space, and conference room. The City of Dacula has outgrown this existing City Hall and accordingly intends to build a new Municipal Complex on a portion of the City Core Property. The new Municipal Complex will allow the City to meet the increasing demand for City services and engage with its residents in a modern and integrated space that will become the anchor for a new downtown civic core and will help to accelerate redevelopment of the area.
- 2. *Entertainment Venue:*** The City intends to use a portion of the City Core Property to construct an entertainment venue as a complement to the Municipal Complex and related public and private improvements. More than 50% of Comprehensive Plan Survey respondents state that green space is a priority for future developments within the City. The entertainment venue could include an amphitheater, multifunctional community green space and public restrooms. The versatile green space could host community events, serve as additional space for the amphitheater, and be a central public area for the community to gather. The site’s proximity to Maple Creek Park and the proposed



Municipal Complex makes it the ideal location for outdoor entertainment, fairs, festivals, and other civic and cultural events.

3. ***Downtown Parking Deck:*** The City intends to construct a central parking deck on a portion of the City Core Property for the new downtown civic core. The proposed parking deck will provide on-site parking for residents and visitors wishing to access the new Municipal Complex, attend events at the proposed amphitheater, or use the complex's commercial storefronts. The parking deck will reduce the land allocated for parking needs and allow additional land uses such as commercial, office, and civic for the community to utilize.
4. ***Sanjo Street Office Front:*** The City intends to encourage the development of two-story office buildings or similar uses along Sanjo Street and McMillan Road within the City Core Property. Local business locations would provide nearby employment opportunities for Dacula residents and provide local access to services. The centralized location of the businesses could encourage foot-traffic and create demand for localized transportation modes.
5. ***Harbins Road Multi-story Retail:*** The City intends to encourage the development of commercial storefronts along Harbins Road within the City Core Property, directly across from the existing City Hall. Local retail shops and restaurants would help facilitate the creation of a town center development pattern supported by the moderate-density housing in Dacula Village to the north of Sanjo Street. Commercial storefronts and restaurants in close proximity with existing residential and an entertainment venue could attract residents and visitors to a walkable communal area. Based on the topography, two to three-story retail buildings would be well suited for the area to bridge the elevation difference from Harbins Road to the interior of the site.
6. ***Residential Infill Development*** The streets within the Historic Dacula Village and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Districts are some of the most historic in Dacula. Some of the properties need extensive repairs, rehabilitation, or redevelopment. Dacula Village is poised to develop into a livable, walkable downtown residential core that helps support the surrounding future mixed-use and commercial developments; however, the City's current zoning ordinances are not conducive to infill development. The primary barriers to infill

development are setback requirements, lot sizes, and sewer availability, which make it unrealistic for developers to redevelop blighted properties.

With the addition of sewer access along Harbins Road, Winder Highway and Maxey Street, the City has the infrastructure to potentially support a higher-density core. The URA is in a position to advise the City Council and staff to discuss potential amendments to the City's zoning resolution to make infill development legally and financially feasible for developers. A new zoning district or overlay that is specific to the downtown core, would provide the City with the opportunity to invest in financially sustainable and productive developments. As road infrastructure projects become harder to fund, and traffic increases, it is in the best interest of the City to diversify the types of developments within its limits. Facilitating the creation of a downtown core will preserve dwindling forests and large historic lots, yield more property taxes per acre, and reduce the time residents must spend in cars to access resources.

7. ***City Monument Signs:*** To better create a sense of place in Dacula, the City intends to construct City Monument Signs to delineate municipal boundaries and the City Core. More than 40% of respondents to the Comprehensive Plan survey stated that they did not have a definite sense of where Dacula begins and ends. The signs would provide markers to enhance awareness of the City's boundaries.
8. ***Place-Making Projects:*** The URA will be tasked to work with the City Council, staff, and community members to select placemaking projects to create a greater sense of connection residents have with their built environment. Residents have a prolific history of honoring veterans and maintaining a public space for such purpose. Monuments and other built structures could be installed to continue the City's tradition of honoring service members in a dedicated "Veterans Park." Additional project concepts include community information boards, stones painted by residents in parks, a brick map of Dacula in a town square, murals and other public works of art, painted or decorative trash receptacles, and/or colorful crosswalks within the Urban Redevelopment Area.
9. ***Urban Redevelopment Area Connectivity:*** The Urban Redevelopment Area is poised to become a communally functional, financially productive, and civically engaging area within the City. In light of the consistently heavy traffic along Harbins Road and the lack

of transportation alternatives to automobile travel within the City, the URA will be tasked with pursuing complete streets within its boundaries via pedestrian pathways, bike lanes, and physical traffic calming devices as appropriate. The aforementioned tools will connect the currently isolated areas within the Urban Redevelopment Area and connect the City to the proposed Piedmont Pathway outlined within the Gwinnett Trails plan.

#### **F. Ownership of Urban Redevelopment Project**

The URA will be the initial owner of certain public facilities included in the Urban Redevelopment Project, including the new municipal complex, entertainment venue, and parking deck, and will convey these facilities to the City after the completion.

#### **G. Public Infrastructure Needs to Support Redevelopment**

To support redevelopment of the area, the following public infrastructure should be provided and/or upgraded: transportation, electric, water, sewer, sidewalks, lighting, streetscapes, and public recreational space. The City's Capital Improvement Program has identified and prioritized projects that should be addressed.

#### **H. Zoning and Land Use**

This Urban Redevelopment Plan will afford maximum opportunity, consistent with the needs of the City as a whole, for the rehabilitation or redevelopment of the Urban Redevelopment Area by private enterprise. The Urban Redevelopment Project will not initially require any zoning changes and will be accomplished in accordance with City's zoning ordinances, as applicable, unless exceptions are made in accordance with the law and the Comprehensive Plan as a component of the Urban Redevelopment Project. This Urban Redevelopment Plan conforms to the general plan of the City as a whole. The Urban Redevelopment Project will constitute an appropriate land use.

#### **I. Conclusion**

The redevelopment of the City of Dacula presents the opportunity to proactively and intentionally redevelop some of the most historied streets in Dacula. This Urban Redevelopment Plan was created for the purpose of aiding in the proactive redevelopment of the City in the Urban Redevelopment Area by identifying public and private improvements that will promote

these goals for the benefit and welfare of the residents of the City and transform and extend Dacula's historic downtown.